The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Northwest Texas

CUSTOMARY FOR EPISCOPAL VISITATIONS

The Bishop schedules a visit to each parish, mission congregation and school within an eighteen-month period. Requests for special dates or additional visits should be submitted to the bishop's office.

An opportunity should be provided for the Bishop to meet with the Vestry or Bishop's Committee during the course of his visitation.

A link to the online Visitation Checklist will be sent well in advance of the Bishop's Visitation. The Bishop's office should be notified as soon as possible after receiving the checklist of all arrangements made for his visit, including housing arrangements (if the diocesan office does not make the arrangements), telephone numbers, a schedule of services and meetings, and what is expected of him at any special meetings or functions. The online form can be found here: https://form.jotform.com/81636716289165.

The Visitation Planning Checklist should be completed and returned no later than two weeks before the visitation. The service bulletin should be sent whenever possible prior to the service(s).

When the Bishop arrives, he should have laid before him the completed information sheets on candidates for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception or Reaffirmation; certificates ready to be signed; the Parish Register and the Register of Services, as well as all other parish record books for his review or signature.

The Holy Eucharist is to be celebrated by the Bishop as the principal service of worship at all Episcopal visitations. The Initiatory Rites, Baptism and Confirmation, are to be celebrated in the context of the Eucharist.

In the case of baptisms or confirmations, the festal white/gold may be used as appropriate. The priest-in-charge is to consult with the Bishop in advance to determine usage for the event. Otherwise the color of the Season or Feast may be used.

The bishop will normally vest in cope and mitre. On occasion the Bishop may wear rochet and chimere if they are appropriate for the particular service and during the warmest months of the year. He will carry his crozier in the procession but a chaplain should be available to assist him during the Liturgy.

Deacons, when present for the Visitation, will read the Gospel, be the principal intercessor, prepare the Table for Eucharist, participate in administration of the Communion, and pronounce the dismissal. If there is no deacon present, the rector, vicar or priest is responsible for seeing that these tasks are accomplished.

The fullest possible use should be made of the Liturgy of the Word: all three lessons, when appointed, and Psalm are to be used. The Psalm may be sung or read.

If a baptism is celebrated, the Bishop is to be the Celebrant for the Baptism as well as the Eucharist. The service of baptism always begins on page 299 in the Book of Common Prayer. The Bishop prefers to preside over all parts of the Liturgy up to and including the Thanksgiving over the Water, and to have the priest-in-charge administer the water to the Candidate(s). The Bishop will use Chrism to mark the forehead with the sign of the cross.

If there is confirmation without baptism, the service begins on page 413. If confirmation is celebrated in addition to baptism, care should be taken to fit the Confirmation Rite smoothly into the Baptismal Rite, especially with regards to the Presentation of the Candidate(s). Please note, when there is a baptism and/or confirmation, the Prayers of the People and the Confession are not used in the service.

The Bishop will confirm while standing at the chancel. Candidates should kneel before him one at a time, and the Presenter should identify each person by full name and specify whether he or she is being presented for Confirmation, Reception or Reaffirmation. It is permissible for the congregation to be seated for Confirmation itself so that the candidates may be seen.

Depending on local custom, sponsors, family members and those who are a part of the confirmand's spiritual journey may be invited to come forward at the time of confirmation to join with the Bishop in prayer and laying on of hands.

Please note, if there are any persons to be baptized, confirmed, received or reaffirmed who identify as non-binary, please provide the Bishop with the pronouns they wish to be referred to with. The Bishop likes this information as a matter of courtesy, but also because the Bishop uses pronouns during the prayer over the person when laying on of hands.

The Visitation Reporting Form (https://form.jotform.com/81786308489170) should be returned to the Bishop's office within one week of the visitation. This form will list out the information on those confirmed, received, and/or baptized. If there were no confirmations, receptions or baptisms, please indicate so on the form and submit it to the Bishop's office.

The loose offering from any service is designated for the Bishop's Discretionary Fund and should be sent to the Bishop's Office within two weeks after the visitation.

Updated as of 08/01/21